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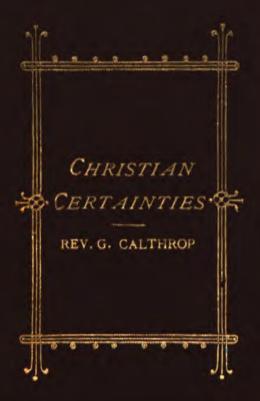
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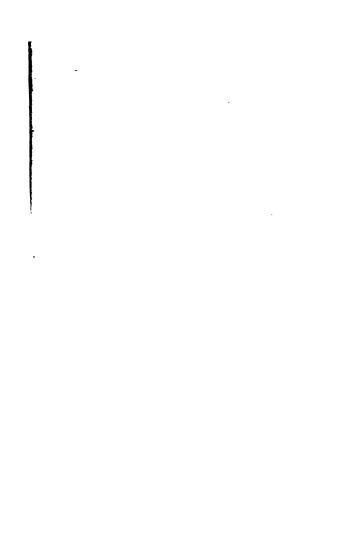


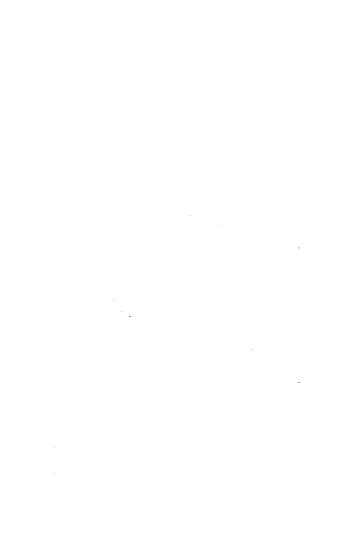


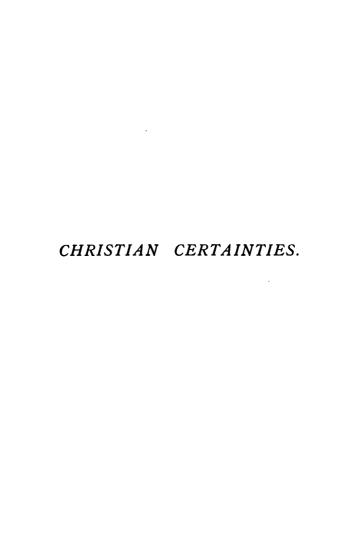
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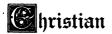














BEING

FIVE SHORT ADDRESSES

DELIVERED IN S. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, AT THE MID-DAY SERVICE, LENT, 1880.

BY THE

REV. GORDON CALTHROP, Vicar of S. Augustine's, Highbury.

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I.

THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP.





The Object of Wonship.

"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews."—John iv. 22.



HESE are the words of our blessed Lord. He addresses them to a certain Samaritan woman, who had requested

Him to settle the long-standing dispute between the two temples, that at Jerusalem and that on Mount Gerizim. It matters little to our present purpose what the woman's motive was in putting the ques-

tion; whether she was in earnest in asking for information, or whether she simply wished, as some have supposed, to turn aside the home-thrusts which were being aimed at her conscience. Anyhow, the Saviour condescended to reply to the question; but at the same time took the opportunity of pointing out to his questioner the insecure and unsatisfactory nature of the position which she and her co-religionists were occupying. "You are worshippers, and make much talk and raise much argument about the But what is the object of matter. your worship? You cannot tell. what is the ground of your worship? Again, you cannot tell. All you know is, that you are approaching some sort of Superior Being, in the vague hope of being accepted by Him. You have no certainty. You are based upon no solid foundation. With us it is different. We know what we are about. We suffer from no vagueness in so important a matter. True worship, we are assured, is based upon salvation, and salvation is something revealed and deposited with a particular people; and can only be sought for in connection with that people and as issuing from them. We rest then upon what is definite. We know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews."

Such, brethren, seems to be the meaning of our Lord in the passage before us, and two or three simple but important thoughts are suggested by it, which I will make it my endeavour to place before you as briefly as I can.

I.—In the first place, then, it is possible to worship, but to worship vaguely. There

is, as you know, a worshipping instinct in man of which he finds it extremely difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to divest himself entirely. Checked in one quarter, this instinct asserts itself in another; forbidden its healthy exercise, it will appear in grotesque or even in horrible forms: and the man who refuses to accept God as his Father in Jesus Christ will often be found in humble prostration before an impalpable abstraction, or before an imperfect or sinful fellow-creature, or even, and this more frequently, before the image of himself. Worshippers, then, we all are: worshippers of something—like the woman of Samaria. All of us have a God. But what God? That is the question. Is it a God who has a real existence? or is it the creation of our own brain; a shadow proceted from our own hearts; the magnified

likeness of ourselves? And then, as to the basis of our worship. Is it also something that has a real existence, something that will bear the strain sure to be put upon it before we have brought this mysterious life of ours to a close? or is it as vague, and unsettled, and indefinite, as the reasons assigned centuries ago by the worshippers who presented themselves with their offerings and prayers in the Samaritan temple?

Brethren, we all of us really dread uncertainty in our religion. Here for a short time, with the suspicion in our hearts that a never-ending existence stretches out for us on the other side of the grave, and that the character of that existence depends upon the use we make of the brief span that is allowed us—we crave, sometimes with a painful craving, for a feeling of

security. We long to be sure—we want to know that we are not mistaken or deceived; but that we have started right, and are advancing right, without the likelihood of having to confess our error, and to retrace our steps, hereafter. Now, is such an assurance possible? We are worshippers: may we know what we worship?

II.—This brings us to our second thought. We may know what we worship: we may have certainty—but only in connection with Jesus Christ. Outside of Christ all is vague, indefinite, shifting. It is only in Christ and through Christ that God can be understood and worshipped.

Let us consider, then, brethren, some of the advantages which you and I possess in the possession of Jesus Christ. Remembering the words of our Divine Master, "He that seeth Me hath seen the Father," we turn our looks in the direction of Jesus of Nazareth and contemplate Him. We see Him a kindly man amongst men, interested in all that interests the human race; homely in His ways, and simple in His tastes; a guest at the rustic wedding; delighting in the society and sports of little children; a genial friend and companion, loving, tender, affectionate, gentle, sympathising—and seeing this, we see the Father. Yet, again, we find Jesus of Nazareth very patient. His disciples are dull and worldly. They are incapable of entering into His ideas. They need continual teaching and correction. But He leads them on along the path of needful discipline, and when His work with them seems to be almost all undone, just quietly, and without a murmur, recommences it again.

then, as to His enemies—and they are many and bitter-He bears with majestic composure the contradiction of sinners against Himself; and by gentleness and meekness, and words of unerring wisdom, strives to win them to a better mind. We see this, and seeing it, "we see the Father." But we mark, also, that there is a severe side to His character. weeps indeed by the graveside of Lazarus; He tolerates, indeed, the touch of the poor sinful woman, holding on to Him in her agony, as to her last hope of purity and honour, and gently bids her go and sin no more. But He flames forth in fiery indignation against the hypocrite and the oppressor; against the man who causes his brother to stumble; against those who bind heavy burdens upon their fellows, bu will not touch the burdens with a little

finger themselves. He cannot endure meanness, or cruelty, or falseness, or unreality; and He speaks terrible words about the "worm that never dieth, and the fire that cannot be quenched." We see this, and seeing it, we see the Father. Yet again—we are in a little upper room in Jerusalem. The disciples are there, and Jesus with them. He rises from the table. He girds Himself with a towel, and taking water in a basin, He goes round from one to another, kneeling down before them, and washing their feet. The silence is painful; for the disciples sit absolutely appalled at this act of the Master Whom they know to be Divine. And we, looking on, ask ourselves, "Is this humble, condescending, self-abasing man-is He, can He be-a counterpart of the awful God in Heaven? And

yet once again, we behold Jesus of Nazareth hanging on the accursed tree, amidst the taunts of the rabble, and the sneers and sarcasms of the priesthood, cast out apparently by God and man alike—scorned, humiliated, suffering, dying—and yet dying with a prayer for His murderers on His pallid lips! Again the thought occurs, "Is it possible that this man should represent the Father?" Yes, it is possible. He that hath seen Me, crucified and dying, hath seen the Father; hath learnt that there is no depth to which the Divine love will not descend for the recovery and restoration of fallen man.

Now then, brethren, we are on solid ground. We are not wandering about in a cloudland of vagueness and uncertainties. In Jesus of Nazareth we see what God is. And we know now, if we never knew it before, that the greatest and holiest, and most awful of all Beings, is also the gentlest, and the tenderest, and the kindest, and the best.

III.—I can only just touch upon the other thoughts which suggest themselves to me in connection with our subject. We want an ideal. Every man has his ideal, whether he is aware of it or not. And such as is the man's ideal, such is the man himself. Well, we have what we want in the spotless manhood, in the perfect character of Jesus Christ. There we see what is the Divine thought about humanity.

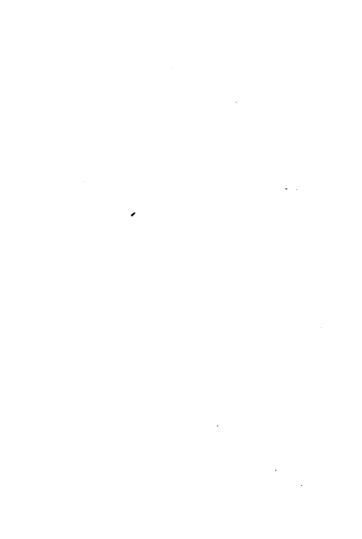
Then, brethren, you and I sometimes look over the known present into the unknown future. A man must have strong nerves, or much acquired insensibility, if he can think of that future without anxiety. "What new modes of exis-

tence shall I be ushered into when the curtain drops which hides this world from the next? What friends shall I find there? What sort of welcome shall I receive there?"

Now, I have no fancy, brethren, for dying blind, for setting my teeth and shutting my eyes, and just taking a leap in the dark. Nor, I feel sure, have you. We want to know what to expect. But may we know? Yes, if we like. What gates of pearl, and streets of gold, and foundations of precious stones may mean, I cannot tell: magnificent and suggestive as the symbolism is, it is vague, and is intended, I suppose, to be vague. But I know what Jesus Christ is, and I can form a tolerably distinct conception of what the nature of that region and state must be of which He is the Centre and

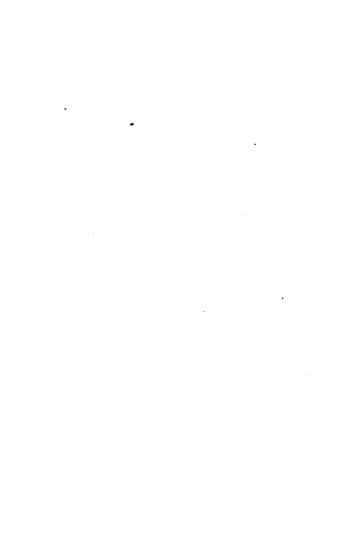
the King. And as to my reception in that mysterious other world, I need to be under no anxiety about that, if in this life I have made through the Spirit a personal acquaintance with the Saviour; if, as S. Paul says, I have come to "know" Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings. In that case I shall be no stranger there. There will be One at least—and He how great and glorious!— Who will stretch out hands of loving welcome to me, and receive me into everlasting habitations. Brethren, let us thank God heartily this morning that we are not left in vagueness and uncertainty, but that we "know," or may know, "what we worship."





II.

THE PRECIOUS DEPOSIT.





The Precious Bepasit.

"I know Whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."—2 Tim.i.12.



N the words which immediately precede our text the Apostle is speaking about the sufferings which he has to undergo for

the sake of the Gospel. Not so much perhaps about bodily pain and personal inconvenience—though of these things, as you know, he had his share—as about those other trials which were peculiarly bitter to

a sensitive mind like his. He was despised and ridiculed on account of his religion. Once the foremost man of his day for learning and vigour of mind, an acknowledged leader of thought, a standard-bearer in the army of intellect, when he transferred himself to the ranks of the illiterate and despised Nazarenes, a howl of contumely from his old fellow-students in the University of Tarsus, or in the classes of the Rabbi Gamaliel, rose after him as he went. Then, the respectable portion of Society could hardly help believing that there was something morally wrong about a who turned the world upside down wherever he went, and who was hounded out of almost every town in which he appeared by magistrates and mobs. And to crown it all, S. Paul was the object of suspicion and dislike within the borders of the Christian Church itself. For a large and influential party branded the doctrine which he taught as revolutionary and heretical, and held up to absolute scorn his pretensions to the Apostolate.

Such things as these, brethren, S. Paul seems to allude to under the term "afflictions of the Gospel." They are very trying to him. He feels them keenly. If anything would make him regret the line he has taken, they would. It would be a terrible thing to find at last that his life had been a failure and a mistake. For then, how humiliating it would prove to be to have undergone all these sufferings and afflictions for nothing—for a mere dream. Then, he might well be ashamed. But he says his life cannot possibly be a failure. Why not? Because he has put himself into the hands of Jesus Christ.

There all his highest interests are safe; for his Divine Lord and Master is "able to keep that which is committed unto Him against that day." About this S. Paul is quite certain. He has no misgivings whatever; and his confident persuasion as to the future enables him to resist the temptation to be "ashamed" of which he is conscious in the present. There are just two thoughts, brethren, arising from the subject, which I wish to commend to your notice. First, that the Christian life may be regarded as the placing of a precious deposit in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, that the Christian life, because it is a deposit placed in such hands, cannot possibly be a failure.

I. Now, as to the first point. We are accustomed, I think—to say, that the first step in the right direction is the surrender of

the will to the Saviour's will, the perfect giving up of self to Him who claims us all as His own. And so saying, no doubt we speak rightly. The demand which the Saviour made whilst upon earth, the extent and stringency of which so startled those who heard it, the demand, I mean, that men should be His and His entirely, that they should forsake all for His sake, that they should take Him as their sole dependence, the alone author and maintainer of their spiritual life, the one supreme centre and object of their affections-this demand, with all its force, is made upon us in the present day, and until it is complied with, the Christian career is not so much as begun. We do not really live, brethren, until we live "unto God." But there is no living unto God, where Christ has not displaced the dominion of self, and entered

into, and taken possession of, the heart. The first step, then, in the Christian life, is the stepping clean out of one region into another: out of self into Christ. The Spirit of God gives us "opening of the eyes;" causes us, that is, to see the true facts of the case about ourselves; delivers us from the power of appearances and deception. And we, seeing how we are situated—we, on our parts, renounce all other trusts and dependences, and lay the whole stress and weight of our eternal interests upon Christ alone. This is the way in which the matter is often put, and I venture to think correctly put, by the Christian preacher.

But, brethren, we may look at the subject from another point of view. God has given to each of us a precious treasure. And each of us may say to himself some-

thing of this kind,—"This marvellous nature, this wondrous humanity, this Being whom I call 'I,' this 'ego,' God has put it into my hands to take care of and make the best of. This body, it has vast possibilities in it. Certainly, it may be the instrument of righteousness, or it may be the minister of sin; and probably, it has latent and undeveloped powers in it which will only be disclosed on the day of Resurrection. And this intellect of mine, and these affections, these passions, these aspirations—what an inheritance they are! And then, this spiritual part of me, by which I realise the unseen, and hold intercourse and communion with God Himself—what an astonishing gift it is! Here, then, am I, body, soul, and spirit, a distinct creation, with infinite capabilities, and a destiny the grandeur of which

imagination in its highest flights would falter in the attempt to conceive. And what shall I do with myself? How shall I acquit myself of so tremendous a trust?" Brethren, have you ever thought of the subject in this light? Well, if you have, you have doubtless gone on to say that were you a sinless being, perhaps—you do not know-perhaps, you would have undertaken the management of this great trust yourself. But then you are not sinless, but sinful, and therefore weak, prone to err, and liable to be deceived, easily drawn aside by your lusts, often beguiled by companions and associates, frequently taking things seeming for things real, things false for things true, that you feel you cannot depend upon your feeble, shifting, changing, self-seeking, vacillating self. And that inasmuch

as this is the case, you have put the precious deposit where you were sure it will be safe: that you have committed into the Saviour's hands your body, soul, and spirit; being confident that He will preserve you through the trials, and dangers, and temptations of life, unto the great day of His appearing and kingdom.

II. Now as to our second point. The Christian life, for the reason just mentioned, cannot possibly be a failure. S. Paul's idea in the passage seems to have been this,—that inasmuch as he had put himself into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, he might be quite sure that none of the troubles to which he was exposed would have the power to cast him down from his steadfastness. These troubles were heavy then, as he intimates. They might be even more heavy

and crushing in the future; but still the grace to bear them would inevitably be given when it was needed; and through Christ, his greatest sorrows would be changed into his most signal and conspicuous blessings. Brethren, let us take the comfort of this thought to ourselves. Trial will come to us all, if it has not already come. And then there comes with it, too frequently, the anticipation of evil. We say, "How can I expect to keep my feet in this rush and torrent of modern life, and not be swept away before it? If my present losses multiply, if my difficulties thicken, I cannot possibly hope to maintain my Christian integrity." Or we say, "How can I bear this long wearying strain of agony, and not be tempted to curse God and die?" Or, again, "It is hard to keep the faith, when the very atmosphere

of society round one is charged to the full with scepticism and infidelity; when to profess openly a belief in Christ is to give up all pretension to intelligence and manliness, and to be stamped by those who know you as a coward or a fool. May not then some sudden assault, or some subtle undermining, for which I am unprepared, overthrow me altogether? See! my companions and contemporaries have gone down one after another under the wave. Must not I soon go down too?" Ah! brethren, there need be no fear if we are really in Christ. Inside that fortress we may, perhaps, tremble at the fierce onslaught of our foes; at their hideous malignity; at their terrible outcry. But we are safe enough. The help, the strength, comes just when it is needed. Christ knows how to manage. Let us trust Him,

for He is perfectly able to keep that which we have committed to Him unto that day.

Add to this another thought, brethren, and we shall have done. When you have committed yourself to Christ, then, as we have said, but not till then, your real life begins. Then, but not till then, what you do will tell upon Eternity. Shall we say that this step has been taken? Well, then, your spiritual character is now being built up-everything contributing to the one great result - and you are becoming, through the discipline of life, more and more meet for the presence and the service of the upper sanctuary. And if this be so, how can your life be a failure? You may not become rich, or learned, or famous, or even prosperous. Nay, you may even be what the world calls unlucky, and men may look on your career with a sigh of

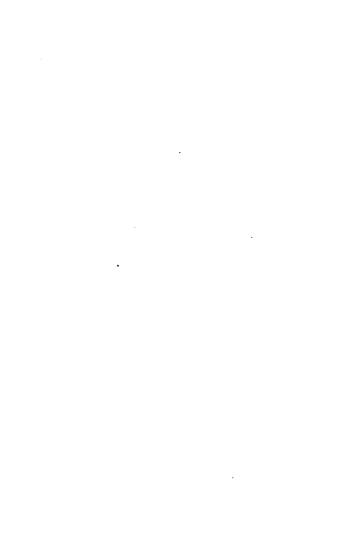
pity, or a shrug of contempt. But you character, man! your inner being; your essential life—that has been practically building up within you by the power of the Holy Ghost, and when the scaffolding drops and the structure is displayed in the light of eternity, it will be found to be to the praise and glory of God.





III.

One Privilege of those who love God.





One Privilege of those who lave End.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God."—ROMANS VIII. 28.



UR subject of yesterday morning brought us to the confines of a thought of some practical interest and value. It suggested

that the Christian disciple, as he passes on through life, acquires more and more of a heavenliness of character, more and more of a meetness for the presence of God Himself, and that the spiritual work that has been done in him will then be disclosed when the trappings of outward circumstance drop off, and things and men are seen as they are—in the kingdom of the future. Perhaps you will say we made no very grand discovery after all. That is perfectly true; there is nothing novel about the idea, nothing but what every one immediately assents to as soon as he hears the assertion advanced. But, at the same time, these simple and universally accepted truths are apt (as we know) to produce a very feeble impression upon our minds, and what everybody believes is frequently what nobody acts upon. It may be well then for you and me, brethren, to follow up this morning the thought of yesterday a little more closely, and to throw upon it the light of the apostolic statement in the text just read in your hearing, that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

You will notice, then, at the outset the limitation in the statement. The beneficial result of which the Apostle speaks is to be found in the case of those who "love God," and (so far as we understand) in their case alone. At all events the Apostle tells us nothing about those who do not love God, and his silence is probably intended to be significant. experience teaches us, that not everybody improves under the discipline of life. What is the purpose of that discipline, and what might have been its result-is another question. I speak merely of the fact. Not all men grow better as they grow older. You part from a friend who shared your thoughts and your studies, and your aspirations, when you were young.

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Ten or perhaps twenty years pass away before you meet him again, and when you do meet him, you cannot help seeingyou don't want to see it, but you cannot help seeing—that your old friend has sadly deteriorated. His tone is lower, and his early nobleness has gone. You do not claim yourself to be anything very good and excellent; but you are obliged to recognise that you move now in one sphere of thought and feeling, and he in another—and that, a far inferior one. Or look around you, brethren! Many of you have had a wide experience of life. Have you not found that prosperity injures some, and adversity injures others? Some become purse-proud, and learn to trust in uncertain riches; or they become luxurious and self-indulgent; or they become grasping and close-eager to add

by any means to their store—already large and abundant enough. And the others, you find, are bitter and cynical, looking enviously at the success of their neighbours, always finding fault, dissatisfied, discontented with everything and everybody. This is not the case invariably; but it is sometimes; and when we observe such deterioration, are we to say that the subjects of it should be reckoned amongst those who do not love God? Well, brethren, it is not our business to judge, but thus much at least is certain, that in such cases, "all things have certainly not worked together for good."

But now, who are they that "love God"? The question may be best answered by referring to the statement of the Apostle immediately succeeding our text. There he unfolds, at some length,

his idea of this particular character. Time will not allow me to go into detail. Suffice it to say, that the "loving God" seems to depend, according to the Apostle, upon our true acceptance of the salvation in Jesus Christ. Men often fancy that they love God; but what they are enamoured of, and what they admire and adore, is a being of their own creation; an intellectual "idol," which has nothing whatever corresponding to it in actual existence. But a God Who is just and holy, Who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and Whose very nature compels Him to visit for transgression, and to be a consuming fire to all that opposes His will—such a God, brethren, you and I do not love: nay, we shrink from Him with an intense recoil, until we can come to view ourselves as forgiven, and Him as

reconciled. They, then, who "love God" are they who have submitted to His will, and accepted His salvation, and consecrated their lives to Him in Jesus Christ His Son.

About these persons we are told that "all things work together for their good." The thought is an encouraging one, brethren! Not unfrequently, I think, we are inclined to adopt the querulous tone of Jacob, and say, "All these things are against me." We have so many vexatious worries in business. Competition is frightful nowadays. Our best laid schemes frequently turn out badly. Our friends disappoint us. We had raised up, with infinite pains and self-denial, a little fabric of prosperity, and the other day, through no fault of ours, it came crashing down to the ground. Gleams of sunshine

perhaps, break through the clouds, but they are "few and far between," or, at least, they appear to us to be so. Life is hard, and we are always in the mill, pacing the old, weary, monotonous round, and never seeming to advance. Ah! brethren, but if we will have it so, our soul will thrive even in this dull shade of adversity. What makes against our earthly wellbeing, will, if we will have it so, make for our spiritual advancement and increase. Faith, patience, and humility, all the force and the sweetness of the Christian character, will grow and increase in us. Christ and the unseen world will become more real as our hold upon the present world slackens; and the man within us, the true Self, taught and led and invigorated by the Spirit of God, will become more thoroughly equipped for the higher in-

heritance of the saints in light. Let us believe it, brethren—I know it is sometimes very hard to do so; but let us believe it! These vexatious, disappointing, worrying, perplexing, humiliating, trying things, shall be found to work for our good. Our good? Yes! Our good! It is not always good for a man to succeed in the usual sense of the word. The life of our Divine Master Himself was not a success, as men count success, though it was and could not but be a success, in the long run. He saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. But it is good for a man to become more pure, more holy, more gentle, more loving and patient, and self-controlling, more sympathising and kind, in fact more Christ-like; and that he will become by the discipline of life-if he be one of those who "love God."

And notice, brethren, the word "together" which stands in our text. "All things work together." It would not be well that life should be all brightness, or all shadow. The plant revels in the sunshine. of course; but for its growth and beauty it is not a little indebted to the nipping frost, and the cold blast, and the cheerless shade. And we-well, we have both brightness and shadow, and far more, I think, as a rule, of the brightness than of the shadow, although sometimes our faithless hearts will come to a different conclusion. "All things work together." You have seen, brethren, sometimes, a vast room filled with machinery, and that machinery in motion. What a confusion the scene presents to an unpractised eye! There are different materials, to begin with -wood, steel, brass, leather, stone; then

there is seeming antagonism between the parts which are in movement; one wheel whirls round rapidly, another slowly, one moves one way, another apparently counteracts it by moving in another. There are checks and counter-checks, opposition, variance, diversity—to all appearance in every direction. You look on, and perhaps, amidst the noise, and the whirl, and the clatter, and the bustle, you are more than half bewildered, and you certainly feel-being inexperienced in such matters—that you can understand nothing. But though you do not understand, you know that all has been adjusted with the most admirable skill for a certain welldefined purpose, that all the parts of the machine are working together for the production of one result, and you would not presume for a moment to offer advice

as to the removal of any portion, however trivial or insignificant it might appear to you to be. See in this, brethren, an image of our Christian life! Things the most diverse, apparently the most antagonistic, joy and sorrow, success and failure, pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity, respect and contempt—all are arranged into one perfect piece of mechanism, by the infinite wisdom of our God, and all work out "together" the result of the sanctification of the man who has given his heart and consecrated his life to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lastly, brethren, it is love that produces this happy result, which touches every event of our life, and turns it into a spiritual blessing. It would do you and me, I suspect, but little good if we believed that a cold infinite Divine in-

tellect ordered things for us, even if it ordered them for the best. But behind the brightness and the prosperity is the love of the Father; and behind the cloud and the sorrow and the trial, again, is the love of the Father; and seeing love in everything, every event becomes to us a lesson of spiritual discipline, and deepens the work of grace which already, through God's mercy, has been begun in our hearts.





IV.

THE GREAT TRANSITION.





The Great Transition.

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren."—I JOHN iii. 14.



OU, all of you, of course, have heard of "the final perseverance of the saints"; and you are aware that the doctrine ex-

pressed by that somewhat antiquated formula has been the battle-field of many a bitter religious controversy—some maintaining that it is possible, others that it is not possible, that a man should fall from grace. Into that thorny ground I

have no intention, as you may suppose, of entering this morning, but I wish to start from the admission that we may know that God has called us to a state of salvation through Jesus Christ; our great anxiety henceforth being to continue in the same unto our life's end. This amount of assurance, at least, the formularies of the Church of England authorise us to enjoy (you will remember that I have just quoted from the Catechism), and this amount of assurance, at least, has the unmistakable endorsement of Holy Scripture itself. There is no necessity, then, in the nature of things that we should remain in ignorance about our present spiritual condition.

And, as a matter of fact, brethren, most Christians, I suspect, are conscious of their Christianity. Spiritual experiences of course differ, and differ widely. heathen who has believed in Christ, and been baptised, can be in no doubt about the transition through which he has passed. A profligate, or vicious man, or an infidel in our own country who has turned, or (as I should rather say) been turned from darkness to light, and from sin to holiness, is sure of his change. too sharply defined to be mistaken. the transition, although as real, may not be as apparent, in the case of the decent formalist-the man who has been living all along respectably unto self, but has never hitherto partaken of the true life of God. Still it does make itself felt somehow before long. It is revealed to him, who is the subject of it—to him at least, if to nobody else. S. Peter's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and Jesus took

her by the hand and lifted her up; and so complete was the cure, so perfect her instantaneous restoration to health and strength, that she was able at once to see after her household affairs, and minister to the Saviour and His disciples. She was aware of what had taken place, and could have entertained no doubts whatever upon the subject. But if the Lord had seen fit that she should recover her health in the usual way, and if she had passed through the fluctuating feelings of convalescence—life slowly, but surely, beating back the encroachments of diseaseeven then she would have arrived at the same conviction about herself at last, although she would have arrived at it at a later period and in a more circuitous way.

Let us take for granted, then, brethren, that, as our text says, we may know that we have passed from death unto life: and let us proceed, without further preface, to consider two points. First, what the Apostle says about the transition itself—I mean the language in which he describes it; secondly, the evidence he mentions by which we may be assured that the transition has taken place.

I. In the first place, then, we are taught in the Word of God that there are two distinct kingdoms in the world, each with a personal head—the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness; that these kingdoms are in the most direct antagonism and in continual conflict; and that there is no intermediate neutral ground between them that we can possibly occupy. All men belong either to one or the other of these two conflicting forces. Those who are not for Christ, are against Him. Now, of

one of these two kingdoms-the latter, the characteristic condition is that of "death." That is to say, the man who plants himself within the borders of the dark region is, by that very circumstance, cut off from the source of life-the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, that perversion of the will, that misdirection of the forces, that waste of the spirit, has begun in him. which, when it has become fixed and settled, is "the second death." Let us, however, be understood. We do not mean that the man is utterly hopeless. We do not mean that he is as bad now as he may be hereafter. We do not regard him as incurably depraved. We do not even deny him the possibility of the possession of certain good and amiable qualities. We simply mean this—that he has entered upon the earliest stages of a career which, if it be persisted in, will bring him to the condition of the man who, to use our Lord's own words, has "lost his soul." He is dead—"death" meaning separation from God, with all the untold horrors which that separation involves.

On the other hand, the subjects of the other kingdom, those who stand on the side of Christ, are partakers of life. It is not easy, brethren, perhaps it is not possible, to give an accurate definition of "life," and to attempt to define might only be to succeed in becoming confused. But we all know what life is. We know it by its manifestations and effects. We associate with the idea all that is bright and cheerful; all that is ennobling and exalting; all that adorns and beautifies the nature which God has given us; all happy activity for the cause of Christ, and

all enjoyment of His presence and love; and this comes to all who are united by a personal union, by contact of spirit with spirit—with the great source and fountain of life Himself. "Because I live," He says, "ye shall live also." Let us sum up, then, this part of our subject in few words. There is death on one hand; there is life on the other. There are those who have been in the one condition, but are now in the other condition. By some means, which the Apostle does not specify, they have passed from death to life; and that they have so passed is what they know, or at least may know, if they choose to take the trouble to ascertain.

II. And thus, brethren, we come to our second topic. How are we to ascertain? What are we to consider satisfactory evidence upon so important a point? This

question the Apostle seems to answer in the passage before us. Now, we are not, I suppose, to assume that the evidence which S. John speaks of here—the "love of the brethren "-is the only evidence, though doubtless it is the chiefest and most important. We find many other marks and tokens mentioned in Scripture. One is "Behold, he prayeth," said God Himself of Saul of Tarsus. Saul had often prayed before. Whose devotions were so regular and unintermittent as his? But now they are the breathings of a living soul. Another, is a value for God's word. "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." But I suppose, as I said just now, that the evidence mentioned in the text is, after all, the most satisfactory. And what is "the love of the brethren"? I would assign two meanings to it. First, I would say that it is the love of Christ's people as such; the love of them, not because of any other qualification than this, that they belong to the Saviour, and bear His likeness. And then I would say, that it is the love which does not stop short at the people of Christ, but goes on to take all human beings into its embrace, and to respect them, and value them, and care for them, as brethren, because they carry the humanity which our blessed Lord Himself is wearing in heaven. Yes, brethren, to leave self-seeking behind you-self-seeking which, if you come to look at it closely, you will find to be hatred of others in its germ-and to have got into the fair region of self-denying, self-sacrificing, humble Christian love, is the greatest change that can possibly take

place in a man's spiritual history. When that change has taken place, he has indeed "passed from death into life."

Permit me to ask a question in conclusion. Seeing that our position is ascertainable, is it not worth while to endeavour to ascertain it? This is a solemn season, brethren, which we are passing through, and these are solemn services. Shall they not have the effect of leading every one of us to inquire—supposing the matter to be not already decided—on which side of the barrier we now stand? More souls are lost simply from want of thought than we are apt to fancy. Now let the question go round. Says some one, "I dislike religious people, I think them all fanatics and hypocrites. I sneer at them when I can, and I rejoice if they fall." Very well, then, your place is settled-your

present place. Says another, "I know nothing about violent spiritual convul-With me everything has proceeded regularly and in due course; and I 'passed from death into life' when I was an unconscious infant." Well, if that be so, brother, you have indeed cause to bless God, and to be thankful. And we hope and believe that your condition is the condition of very many. Still, it is as well to remember, that all this avails only if the life be the life of one who is living unto Christ-who walks in the light as He is in the light. "Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision." Says another, "I know nothing; I am sure of nothing; I am all abroad about myself." Brother, is it not as well to know when the means

of knowledge are placed within your reach? You are not contented with uncertainty in your business. There you demand to know. Can you be content with uncertainty, when the business is nothing less than the destiny and the welfare of your own immortal soul?



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v.

THE VISION OF GOD.





The Visian of Gad.

"We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."—
I JOHN iii. 2.



OVE of that which is good is only another form of hatred of that which is evil. An intense personal devotion to Christ is

invariably associated with as intense an antagonism to all that is opposed to Christ. Of this fact a noticeable exemplification, as you are aware, may be found in the character of the beloved disciple

John. We call S. John "the Apostle of love." We say that he drank more deeply than any other man ever did into the spirit of his Divine Master; and yet, if we take the New Testament writers, not one of them expresses himself in terms of such extreme severity against those who refuse allegiance to the Lord, as does the "Apostle of love"; not one draws so sharply, and with so stern a hand, the line of demarcation between the Church and the world. According to S. John. "the world hateth the brethren, and he that hateth his brother is a murderer." According to S. John the world "knoweth not" God, and is in the darkness of absolute ignorance about Divine things; the world is ready to hear any deceiver, and to follow any antichrist; and what is the most terrible announcement of all, the

world "lieth in the wicked one," and mankind are divided into two hostile camps—the children of God, and the children of the devil. These are painful statements, brethren. We shrink as we repeat them; but inasmuch as they come from such a quarter we have nothing left to do but to regard them as the utterances of one who, through the inspiration of the Spirit, sees into the very heart and core of human life, penetrating through all disguises, and has been commissioned to disclose things to us—not as they seem, but as they really are.

In the passage to which my text belongs this antagonism between the Church and the world is brought forward again. The Apostle tells us that the world, being in ignorance about God, totally misunder-

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standing Him, misunderstands also the true character of the disciples of Christ. "It knoweth us not," he says. Over against this ignorance, he sets the knowledge which the disciple has of his own position. The disciple is aware, says S. John, that he is now—even now—a son of God. About this he stands in no doubt. And in virtue of his sonship, he is looking for an inheritance. But as to the exact nature of the inheritance, as to the details of it,-his knowledge is at present exceedingly small. He may have anticipations and surmises, like a boy-prince waiting for the possession of his royalty and king-Indeed God has revealed to him something already by His Spirit. still, eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived the things that God hath prepared for them

that love Him. That is to say,—the inheritance has not yet been shown forth in actuality; has not yet come to manifestation; and there is, of necessity (human faculties being what they are), at present an indistinctness and vagueness about the whole subject. However, continues the Apostle, one thing is certain. One thing, amidst the vagueness, the disciple knows, He knows that when Christ shall appear he shall be like Him. And how does he know this? Because when Christ appears he shall see Him as He is. This will be the disciple's great future privilege - to see Christ as He is. But in order thus to see Christ he must be like Christ. There must be an assimilation of one to the other; there must be the development into the fulness of its perfection of that relation which already exists between the Saviour and His true and loving disciple.

Such, brethren, seems to be the meaning of the passage with which we are now concerned. I propose to examine two topics which it suggests, and to inquire with you—first, what we, as Christians, know with certainty about our present spiritual position? and, secondly, what we, as Christians, know with certainty about our future spiritual prospects?

I. In the first place, then, Christians are the "sons of God:" no less. It may seem a bold thing, brethren, to make such an assertion when we remember our inconsistencies; our sins; our personal demerit in every way. But there are two sides to the question; and on one side, over against our own unworthiness stands the purpose of God to bring us to glory through

Christ, and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit to carry that purpose into effect. And when God bids us go up, it is not true humility to say, "No! I am not good enough. I will sit down here." It is not true humility; it is something very different from humility to refuse to recognise what God has done for us, and what He intends concerning us. So. true Christians are the sons of God. Servants. of course they are. For the great God is their Master, and to Him they will have to give account. Subjects, of course they are. For the great God is their Sovereign and their King, and they bow themselves to His will. But beyond and above all, God has revealed Himself to them as their reconciled and loving Father in Christ, and they are His children. Nor does this fact imply a mere change of status or condition;

it implies a change of heart, of feeling, of faculty, of will. Children have always the nature of their parents; and we are born of God, and bear a likeness, feeble though it may be, to the great Source and Original from which our spiritual being is derived. Our sympathies are on God's side. We make, I say it with all reverence, common cause with God. Through the great transformation which He has wrought in us by the power of His Spirit, we have come to hate what God hates, and to love what God loves. In fact, to use the bold language of S. Peter, "We are partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world through lust." So much, then, brethren, for our first point. We know that we are the sons of God.

II. In the next place, What do we know

about our future spiritual prospects? Not much, for the thing has not yet come forth into actual existence; but still something, as S. John tells us,—even this, that we shall be like Christ, and being like Him shall see Him as He is. The connection between these two things-between the likeness and the vision—seems not very difficult to trace. There is a way of seeing Christ which is a way of misunderstanding Him. Herod Antipas saw Christ, but saw in Him only a poor, fanatical, unpractical, contemptible dreamer. The Jewish multitude saw Christ, but saw in Him only the popular preacher and the worker of miracles. The Scribes and Pharisees saw Christ, but saw in Him only the chief obstacle in the way of their overweening ambition. Saul of Tarsus saw Christ, but saw in Him only

the author of a pestilent heresy, and a dangerous opponent of the kingdom of God. Such a vision of Christ, of course. hardens the heart; repels us from the Saviour; places us in antagonism to Him; shuts us out while it lasts from all possibility of becoming conformed to His image. What is wanted, then, brethren, in order to see Christ to any good purpose? Sympathy with Him-moral likeness to Him. Where these exist, the contemplation of Christ, the vision of Him, produces an increasing spiritual assimilation; and men. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is this experience of the Christian life which enables the Christian to understand what is in store for him in the future. Even now, in a measure, he sees Christ as He is; but there are many hindrances within and without. Even now he knows that there is a connection between the vision and the likeness; the more he sees, the more like he becomes—the more like he becomes, the more he sees. And thus he arrives at the conclusion that, when the day of the Saviour's appearing dawns, he shall wake up in perfect likeness to his Divine Master, because without that perfect likeness he could not hope to enjoy the perfect vision of God in Christ.

What, then, does the Christian know about his future? He knows that he shall wear the likeness of Christ. And there you have, I think, a tolerably definite conception. A perfect purity; an unclouded communion with God; a will moving in absolute harmony with the Divine will;

and then, to crown it all, a spiritual body, like unto Christ's glorious body, to be the instrument by which we shall apprehend the spiritual world in which our lot will be cast—these, brethren, are ideas that we can fairly grasp: "fairly," I say, though not of course adequately; and so we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Brethren, the subject we have thus discussed together has a very practical character. It suggests the mighty power there is in what I may call spiritual self-respect. Such self-respect in the old days kept a certain young man safe in circumstances in which the resolution of most would have melted like wax before a fire. "How can I—I, a child of the covenant, and servant of the Most High—do this great wickedness,

and sin against God?" And to this same self-respect the sacred writers in the New Testament make their continual appeal, "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." "Seeing that ye are risen with Christ, seek those things that are above." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, forasmuch as ye know that ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ." What is all this but saying in effect, "See that, by God's grace, ye be what Christ has made you." And surely, Christian brethren, it may help you and me in these days of ours, when men tell us it is so hard really to follow Christ—it may help us to keep the faith, and to be righteous, and loving, and pure-if we get into the habit of remembering the magnificent position in which Christ, through His grace, has placed us now, and the still

more magnificent position which He has in store for us, and which shall be manifested in the great day of His appearing and kingdom.



